

DCFS INFO MEMO 2005 -

STATE OF WISCONSIN
Department of Health and Family Services
Division of Children and Family Services

To: Area Administrators/Assistant Area Administrators
Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare
DCFS Bureau Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Developmental Disabilities Service Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Foster Home Licensees
Child Placing Agency Licensees
Licensing Chiefs
Tribal Chairpersons/Human Services Facilitators

From: Burnie Bridge, Administrator

Re: Model Policy for Working with Foster Parent During Allegations of Child Maltreatment

Many foster homes experience allegations of child maltreatment at some time during their licensure. Foster homes are at a greater risk for allegations of child maltreatment, and many times care for children who have experienced traumatic events in their lives. When allegations occur, foster parents have expressed feeling isolated and cut off from any communication with their agency, foster children, and other foster parents. This experience can have a tremendous impact on foster parents and may result in agencies losing valuable foster homes.

The attached policy was developed in collaboration with foster parents, foster care staff, and child protective services staff at both the county and state levels to provide guidance to counties when they work with foster homes who are the subject of allegations of child maltreatment. Foster parents suggested that information, communication, and support from an agency before, during, and after an allegation and assessment of child maltreatment will have a significant impact on their ability and willingness to continue to provide quality care to foster children.

This policy recommends providing foster homes with information about statewide and local policies that agencies must follow when there are allegations of child maltreatment. It also includes ways to reduce the possibility of allegations against foster homes by providing more comprehensive information about foster children, establishing crisis or emergency plans when a child is placed, and building in support services for foster homes.

Within the bounds of confidentiality, the policy encourages communication with foster parents, including educating foster parents about what information needs to remain confidential. Disclosing the allegations and allowing foster parents a contact person(s) in an agency can help them understand the context, basic timeframes, and expectations regarding the allegations and assessment process.

Finally, the policy emphasizes follow-up with a foster home after findings of the allegation have been finalized to help them cope with any emotional impact that the allegation and assessment may have had on themselves and their family and to allow for improvement and training to better prepare the foster home in the future.

Please read through the model policy, consider incorporating important aspects of this model policy into your local agency policies regarding allegations of child maltreatment against foster homes, and engage in a conversation with foster families about how to better support them when allegations occur.

As the Out-of-Home Care Committee continues with the development of a foster parent handbook, Item K.5 in the Program Enhancement Plan, a requirement to provide foster parent with information about allegations of child maltreatment against foster parents and subsequent investigation procedures will be discussed.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: S. Kate Johnson
Out-of-Home Care Planner
DHFS/DCFS/BPP
P.O. Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916
Phone: (608) 266-6874
FAX: (608) 264-6750
E-Mail: mjohnnsk@dhfs.state.wi.us

MEMO WEB SITE: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/partners/local.htm>

C: Foster Care Coordinators
Directors, Private Child Placing Agencies
County Child Protective Services Supervisors

Attachment

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